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Carter, Alexandra (2005) London 1908: a synchronic view of dance history. *Dance Research*, 23 (1) . pp. 36-47. ISSN 0264-2875 [Article]

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London, 1908: A Synchronic View of Dance History

ALEXANDRA CARTER

London in 1908 was a busy year for dance. Performances were presented by the 'classical' dancers Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan and Ruth St Denis;¹ ballet was thriving in the context of popular entertainment at the larger music halls and in pantomime; the Russians Lydia Kyasht and Adolph Bolm performed at the Empire and Pavlova danced at a private party for Edward VII and Alexandra. However, the fact that these events were happening at the same time, were 'synchronic', goes unrecorded in most dance historiography which tends to trace the development of genres, or artistic careers, through time rather than across time. This latter diachronic approach is the traditional *modus operandi* of historical study. It has as its motivation a search for meaning by identifying cause and effect. Simply, it is enquiry into how one particular historical moment or person impacted on what came next. This diachronic perspective facilitates a 'long view', allowing us to see linear threads of connection. A problem which arises from this approach is that because dance forms or artistic genres tend to be the prime organising factors – for example, the history of social dance or ballet, the development of modern dance, the life work of Merce Cunningham – it is often difficult to gain a full flavour of activity in a particular period and to give full value to that activity. Our view is always partial and (although post-modern debate has undermined this claim) carries implicit notions of progression, of 'improvement' through time.

Foucault offers an alternative position, revealing an interest in 'systems of simultaneity' ([1966], 1997: xxiii) and in 'observing how a culture experiences the propinquity of things ... a history of resemblance' (p. xxxiv). He is not concerned with the progress of knowledge, but attempts to 'bring to light the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge ... grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection but rather that of its conditions of possibility' (p. xxii).² That is, Foucault is not concerned with the causes of events or with individuals as primal causes or agents, but with the conditions that make events possible at particular moments in time.³ The historian, therefore, becomes like an archaeologist, digging across the space rather than down through the strata of time in order to see the connections which comprise our knowledge of a particular culture in a particular period.

Foucault's approach, explored in *The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences* (1966), was a macro project which identified key epistemic shifts of consciousness in the creation of the human sciences. In some senses, these ideas can be likened to Saussure's conception of language as a system which acquires meaning not through reference to 'origins', not to things in the world, but by the structural relationships across and between signs and their signifiers. We would understand dance events, therefore, not by reference to what happened before, but by what was happening at the same time. As Barthes and others have claimed, however, we cannot dichotomise the synchronic/diachronic debate. As language acquires meaning through its historical journey as well as through this structural positioning, events are also encumbered by historical lineage. People experience time both diachronically and synchronically; we carry our history with us, a history experienced in a series of moments-in-time. Traditional historiography has always taken into account contemporaneous events although the writings of dance history have been slow to recognise the relationship of dance to its contemporary culture, a position now well remedied in the last few decades of dance scholarship. Nevertheless, the underlying motivation of most historiography, including that of dance, has been one of identifying the causal, whether 'cause' is located in events-thought-time or motivated by the individual actors of history.⁴

My position here is not to claim a unique synchronic case for looking at theatre dance across a particular time but to extend the boundaries of genre which compartmentalise our view; to weave together the narratives of genre in order to disrupt the discrete parameters of those narratives. Despite dance's location within cultural studies, it is rarely located in relation to itself. We can read about postmodern dance in 1970's America in relation to its political context but how often is our vision allowed to scan across the 1970s to juxtapose modern and postmodern dance, ballet, commercial dance and dance which falls in to no neat categories at all? We read of the importance of the mid-1960s in the development of British contemporary dance but we have to turn to at least a separate chapter if not another book to see what was happening in the ballet world at the same time.⁵

What might be the purpose of juxtaposing dance forms from a particular historical moment in time? It might well be argued that, from a phenomenological perspective which considers the lived experiences of individuals, these cross-genre explorations are not only irrelevant but also arbitrary. Today, audiences for *The Lion King* are arguably not the same as those for the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and even these are not necessarily the same as the audience for a small independent company. Some individuals move across these categories, but many will not. We have our preferences and our passions for one theatre dance form which will not necessarily lead us to, or even inform, our experience of others. Why look, therefore, across a field which, in terms of an individual person's experience, comprises seemingly disparate parts? It behoves the historian, I suggest, to stand back and take a wide view, one which can contest the specificity of dance styles, genres, practitioners and performing contexts by

revealing their interconnectedness not in terms of similarity nor even of dance influence, but in terms of their relationships to the 'conditions of possibility' which produce them. Such a view does not negate the randomness of history, or chance; nor does it attempt to tie up a neat holistic package, but it does weave a far richer web of historical knowledge.

Despite the theoretical frameworks and laudable intentions which might be deployed in retrospect, my initial reaction to this research was very simple – it sounds interesting. What better starting point is there for research? I had no clear hypothesis but questions arose which guided its trajectory. These questions surfaced as a result of serendipity when, for another project, I looked at dance events in London in 1908 and noticed certain phenomena which led me to explore this concentrated period not only more deeply, but also more widely.⁶ For example, the very fact that Duncan, St Denis and Allan all performed in London during this year not only highlights the internationalism of the early modern dance scene but raises questions of influence, cross-fertilisation and even appropriation which disrupt the mythological status of individual genius which these women have nurtured for themselves and that has been accrued in the literature. Of further interest to me was that, following Maud Allan's premiere of her infamous *The Vision of Salomé* on 8 March, on 30 March the Alhambra Palace of Varieties presented its new production of *Sal Oh My!* This was not only a burlesque of Allan but of Duncan as well. A venue which claimed to be the home of British ballet, located at the heart of London's popular West End entertainment scene, had its acute eye on the serious and burgeoning world of 'art' dance and, in this extraordinarily prompt response, was not taking it seriously. The congruence of a London music hall presenting a dancer from Paris (La Belle Leonora) satirising a Canadian dancer's rendition of a Biblical story, produced and presented within a climate saturated with public knowledge of an Irish playwright's (Wilde's) perspective on the tale, makes any postmodern notion of cultural juxtapositions seem rather late in arriving.

Borrowing again from Saussure's claims about language, as words change their meaning when placed alongside each other, so historical events can change meaning when seen alongside other events against which they are not usually juxtaposed. Questions arise, therefore, about influences within and across dance genres and performance contexts and about the relationship of these to contemporary society. In exploring the range of dance activity, I also identify some of the cultural conditions which made theatre dance, as seen in London in 1908, possible.⁷ So as not to disrupt the narrative below but in order to give a further flavour of the period, a brief account of the named works is given in the Appendix.

The year 1908 is chosen as a case study; this choice is arbitrary and was inspired by noticing the events as mentioned above. Further research proved this to be a fortuitous choice, for as a caption alerting readers to Ruth St Denis's performances at London's Scala theatre notes, 'she is not unlikely to prove a huge draw now that the dancing cult is so fashionable' (*The Bystander*, 30 Sept.: 685). There was a diversity of theatre dance practice in propinquity on the stages

of London around the turn of the nineteenth and in to the twentieth century. In his book first published in 1915, the dance historian Perugini notes that the last twenty years or so had seen 'every form of dance and ballet that could possibly exist'. Amongst these, he cited "'sand" dances; "buck" dances; "hypnotic" dances; "Salome" dances; "vampire" dances; "apache" dances' plus "'Viennese", Egyptian, Russian, "Inspirational" dancers and even English ballet-dancers in an all-British ballet' (1946: 268). Some of these were passing fashion; some are retained in our historiography.

As suggested by the amount and diversity of activity, London was a key stop on the touring circuit for international artists.⁸ In 1908, Lydia Kyasht appeared at the Empire with Adolph Bolm, 'giving a series of dances from ballets most favoured in the Russian capital' (*The Sketch*, 19 August: 177).⁹ Maud Allan appeared at the Palace in March, Isadora Duncan at the Duke of York's in July; in September Loie Fuller's pupils were at the Hippodrome and Ruth St Denis at the Scala and Fuller herself appeared at the Palace in November. Their London sojourn overlapped and we know that they were aware of or actually saw each other's work. St Denis saw Duncan and was full of praise, but was cynical about Maud Allan. Duncan herself parodied Allan; her friend and biographer Victor Seroff remembers Duncan 'amusing friends with a rendition of Maud Allan, "wiggling" through her version of the "Dance of the Seven Veils"' (Seroff 1971: 126). It is no surprise that these 'interpretative' dancers, as they were also known, were aware of each other's work for their artistic motivations were similar. They were not alone, however, in presenting classical dancing. Madame Artemis Colonna, the 'celebrated Classic Greek Dancer' appeared 'direct from Athens' in dances to Chopin, Gounod and Strauss (Hippodrome undated prog. 1908). The caption to her press photograph, which read 'Classicism Again! Yet Another Barefooted Dancer', indicates the popularity of this approach to dance (*The Sketch*, 14 October: 3). The fact that Mme. Colonna was actually a Miss Newham (Guest 1992: 21) is one of numerous instances where changes of name throughout the history of dance makes any conclusions about nationality of performers most uncertain. The Artemis Colonna is actually the name given to a Greek marble statue of Artemis of c.450BC so this artist was, at least, drawing on an appropriate source. *The Sketch*, in their index to Vol. LXIII 1908, categorised this dance activity as the 'Greek Vogue'. What this alerts us to is a situation which is sometimes forgotten; that Isadora Duncan, despite her motivating force, constructed persona and historical reputation as individual genius, was part of a much wider cultural and artistic fascination with the classical world. The press were also alert to the influences on this 'interpretative' work. A photograph of Ruth St Denis as Radha is captioned 'The Latest Exponent of the Delsartian School', a method also favoured, it was noted, by Maud Allan (*Illustrated London News*, 31 October: 601).

What the nature of London's venues and the London appearances of these artists exemplify, however, was a situation which they struggled with throughout their careers. That is, despite their own desires to site themselves in the domain of high culture, the borders between this and popular entertainment were fluid

and strategies had to be found for their work to be taken seriously. The manager of the Palace Theatre, Alfred Butt, programmed Allan as a 'turn' on the venue's variety bill alongside acts such as impersonators, caricaturists and educated sea lions. Such an artistic demotion was countered by Allan's self publicity and Butt's programming of a private preview performance for the press and a social elite (see Koritz 1995).¹⁰ Not only did this strategy give the veneer of class to economic necessity, a situation which Allan successfully negotiated throughout her career, but the notion of refined, classical dancing appealing to the masses in a British music hall reveals the instability of boundaries between high art and popular culture. As Hobsbawm (1987: 220) describes, 'from the end of the nineteenth century the traditional kingdom of high culture was undermined by ... [a] ... formidable enemy: the arts appealing to common people'. At this interface, the 'serious' artist was received in light-hearted fashion; another photograph of St Denis as Radha is captioned 'Piling on the Atmosphere' (*The Sketch*, 28 October: 65).

This democratisation of culture was contingent largely on a mass market arising out of working class migration to cities, wider employment opportunities, stable income and time for leisure. It was perhaps nowhere more manifest than in the location of ballet and other dance forms in musical theatre, in pantomime and on the variety bills of the larger music halls such as the Palace, the Alhambra and Empire. At the Hippodrome in 1908 the production of *Honeyland*, based on the theme of *The Sleeping Beauty*, included Tiller's Hippodrome Girls and Herr Heidrenreich's Famous Flying Ballet. Dance had long been a component of pantomime and it constituted the spectacle so dearly loved by the Victorians. It was intimately connected with the Commedia roles of Columbine and Harlequin for pantomime had appropriated their fairytale elements and the harlequinade. A large number of the illustrations drawn from the history of pantomime, include, from the early nineteenth century onwards, not just individual dancers, usually in a fairy role, but massed casts of *corps de ballet* (Mander and Mitchenson 1973).¹¹ The desire for spectacle lingered on in to the twentieth century, particularly in the traditional Christmas pantomimes in venues such as Drury Lane and the Royal Adelphi.¹² A significant feature of this form of entertainment was 'the preponderance of young women in the cast and the mass transvestisim of processions and large groups gathered for any purpose' (Booth 1981: 79). It was 'the female physique and the female domination of fairyland' which were 'linked together in a sexual, pictorial and spectacular combination of ideal purity and handsome flesh'. Although placing the cast of *Dick Whittington* (Drury Lane 1908) alongside the 'serious' early modern dancers, for example, might seem an unrelated juxtaposition, key words echo across the dance activity presented in London in 1908: the female physique, ideal purity, handsome flesh; the pastoral, the pictorial and the pretty. It is this 'prettiness' which Flitch (1912) observes both in the painterly arts of the period and in the dance. He suggests a reaction against the excess and vulgarity found particularly in the continental arts and entertainment of the *fin de siècle*, a reaction manifest in what he describes as the *école anglaise*. He sees this 'prettiness, insignificant but

cheerful' (1912: 98) exemplified in the companies of John Tiller (the Tiller Girls) compared with the can-can dancers of the previous generation. If the North American dancers who toured London in 1908 tried to disrupt the banality of this prettiness by drawing on the tragedy of myth, as in Duncan's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, or the darker emotions such as in Maud Allan's 'embodiment of sorrow' to Chopin's Funeral March (*The Sketch*, 1 April: 361), their performances were still romantically inclined and pictorially satisfying.¹³ Even the story of Salomé did not exploit its full potential for violence and horror. A survey of images of women in *The Sketch* for 1908 reveals a plethora of prettiness. Not beautiful by conventional standards, women are prettified by costumes, hats, setting, camera angles and special effects. Furthermore, many images of women's bodies are seen within, or even as, scenes of nature. However, despite the attempts to create a symbiotic relationship between women and nature, there is nothing 'natural' about the representations. The images are soft, feminine and thoroughly artificial.¹⁴

The pastoral, the pretty and the mass spectacle of female bodies were also evident where ballet retained its traditions most keenly, at the Alhambra and Empire palaces of varieties (see Carter 2005). Despite being placed on a variety bill, the ballet retained its historical traditions and was part of the international touring circuit for classical ballet dancers (see Guest 1992). In 1908, the new productions *A Day in Paris* (Empire) and *The Two Flags* (Alhambra) exemplified the venues' strategy of not only programming topical ballets and presenting current events but also using theatricalised versions of social dance forms. *A Day in Paris* told the story of a family who were given a tour of Paris by a student impersonating a Thos. Cook representative. It was a work which 'reflects the mood of the moment in happiest fashion' (*The Sketch*, 28 October: 96). *The Two Flags* included a scene described as 'The Presentation of a Dreadnought' (this being a recently built British battleship); a motor car appeared on stage in *The Belle of the Ball* (Empire 1907, still in production) and step-dancing was seen in *A Day in Paris*, as was the notorious gender-bending Apache Dance.¹⁵ Other productions presented in 1908 such as *Cupid Wins* and *Paquita* at the Alhambra and a revival of *Coppélia* at the Empire continued the romantic and pastoral traditions of ballet's subject matter. Similarly, audiences for both venues comprised a gamut of social class, from the respectable working classes to, on the night of Adeline Genée's return to the Empire in June, HRH the Prince of Wales. These conglomerate audiences; the location of ballet in music hall venues; the simultaneous programming of romantic ballets based on myth and legend and those based on current affairs, and choreography which embraced both the *danse d'école* and the newer theatricalised forms of social dance, all exemplify the shifting of social and artistic boundaries in Edwardian England.

Paradoxically, however, perhaps because the venues which housed dance no longer sustained clear boundaries between 'art' and 'entertainment', the dancers themselves did. The diversity of dance activity in London in 1908 sharpened the performers' own clear demarcation between their respective forms:

To the advocates of the old school the new classical dance ... (that is, Duncan, Allan) ... is little better than a freak performer; to the austere classicist the ballet dancer is but a smiling automaton, and both agree in refusing to recognise the skirt-dancer as a dancer at all.

Flitch 1912: 10

One of the key motivations for such a protective strategy was their status as women on stage. As well as those whose names are commonplace in our dance historiography, there were others who have now disappeared. There appeared, in just one short period at the Palace, Mlle. Roberty with her Whirlwind Dancers and Pirouettists, the Les Molasso Cyclonic Dancers and La Belle Oterito (who seems to have appropriated her name from the more renowned Spanish singer and dancer La Belle Otéro). As well as solo artists, women found employment as dancers with in-house companies such as the Palace Girls and touring companies such as those of John Tiller. Whereas dance historiography has noted the significance of the early modern dance pioneers' strategic battles with the sexism of the age (see, for example, Banes 1998, Tomko in Carter 2004), and women had been populating theatre stages for centuries, the proliferation of women dancers employed in the music hall ballets, in pantomime and in musical spectacle also contributed to the disturbance of the sexual status quo. For the great majority, theatre employment was an economic necessity and not a political act, but it resonated with what is arguably the most significant political activity of the period: the women's suffrage movement. 1907 had seen the first major mass demonstration by suffrage groups, and in June 1908 two massive demonstrations were held in Hyde Park, culminating in a crowd of half a million people. The first feminist text on venereal disease was published and issues of marriage and free love were addressed in publications such as Mauve Braby's enigmatically titled *Modern Marriage and How to Bear It* (1908). The staking of claims for women as creative dance artists and the employment of women as performers in ballet and popular entertainment were not without problems as they all had to negotiate the dominant gendered ideologies of the age. Consciously or not, their lives, careers and their performances intersected with 'the woman question', a key historical moment in sexual politics.

If, by their employment on the stages of London, women dancers nudged askew the narratives of gender, they wittingly or otherwise colluded with other dominant narratives of the age. As suggested, the subject matter of dance works presented in 1908 reveals a neo-Romantic longing for the pastoral and the natural world. This is evident in works such as the Empire's *The Dryad* and the Alhambra's *Les Cloches de Corneville*; in Maud Allan's *Spring Song*; in Duncan's whole dance rationale which drew its inspiration from the movement of nature. The late Victorian period had seen a resurgence of romanticism and this, with its related naturalism, tipped over in to the twentieth century, becoming a response to the excesses of the *fin de siècle* and an antidote to urbanisation and industrialisation (see Teich and Porter 1990). Similarly, the mythological and literary sources not only offered an alternative to contemporary reality, but also gave dance of all kinds a gravitas.

Sitting happily alongside the escapism of the pastoral, the romantic, the mythological and the literary subject matter of dance were works which celebrated Empire, imperialism and colonisation. Although the ballets on the London stages no longer celebrated Britain's Empire so blatantly as they had done in the latter years of Victoria's reign, *The Two Flags* acknowledged Britain's naval superiority and her new international cooperation by moving in a neat political strategy from the scene 'Mistress of the Sea' to the next scene 'Hands across the Sea'.

The internationalist outlook was manifest in a different way by St Denis' and Allan's works which reverberated with the orientalist ideologies constructed during this period (see Desmond 1991 and Koritz 1995). As Hobsbawm (1987: 223) notes, Western arts at this time were influenced by both imperialism and by exotic cultures, for 'the Age of Empire was not only an economic and political but a cultural phenomenon' (p. 76). Whether deploying subject matter about parts of the world which the West actually 'owned' or to which they were deeply attracted, political ideologies were danced out on the stages of London.¹⁶ In diverse ways, the subject matter of dance appropriated other cultures, thus reinforcing the sense of superiority of the 'civilised' over the 'primitive' (Hobsbawm, p. 80) or, if the cultures of Europe could hardly be described as 'primitive', of Britain demonstrating the solidity of her presence in an increasingly politically unstable Europe. Furthermore, says Hobsbawm, 'culture in the accepted elite sense was also notably internationalised by the sheer ease of personal movement within a broad cultural zone'. As suggested, if there is one characteristic which is strikingly evident when looking at London's dance activity in 1908, it is the import and export of artists. As Artemis Colonna has demonstrated – and it is just as likely that Mlle. Roberty was actually Miss Roberts – 'foreign' sounding names on programmes must be treated with caution. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the traffic of artists between Britain, the United States, Europe and latterly Russia was commonplace.

When exploring the dance activity across one year, it becomes clear the extent to which the dance world re-treated and disseminated fashionable styles or subjects and provided a forum for general comment in the press. Allan's *The Vision of Salomé* makes an interesting if unusually resonant case study. *The Sketch*, a popular weekly newspaper, asked on 23 March 'Is the Head a Necessary Prop?' after complaints had been made about the sacrilegious act of using a property head of John the Baptist. The Baptist's head must have presented a somewhat more farcical image in the Alhambra's burlesque of *Salomé*, for here it was crowned by a trick wig which allowed the 'hair to stand on end at suitable moments' (*Era*, 4 April: 18). *Salomé*'s popularity was evidenced by a photo of 'Miss Maud Dennis, one of the many Salomes on the music hall stage' (*The Sketch*, 2 September: 250). (It is unknown whether this artist's name was an intentional composite or genuine.) The international dimension was demonstrated in six photographs depicting 'a few of the multitude of Salomes now dancing in America' (*The Sketch*, 23 September: 345). *Salomé* did not escape a cross-dressed treatment, for a Malcolm Scott 'who is Appearing at the Pavilion,

now gives a Salome dance in the Allan manner (more or less) ...' (*The Sketch*, 17 June: 307).¹⁷ He is shown wearing an undershirt but his gestures are certainly evocative of Allan's. *The Sketch* was also capable of erudite observation, for two photos of Allan in her *Spring Song* dance, which also appeared in the *Salomé* programme, are captioned 'Is Maud Allan's classical costume correct?' (1 July: 394). In support of this scholarly concern, Allan's calf length skirt is juxtaposed against a tanagra figure in the British Museum of a Greek dancing girl wearing a skirt of just above knee length.¹⁸ A case study of how this artist was presented in one particular newspaper reveals the obsession of the press and the public with Maud Allan, who celebrated her 250th consecutive performance at the Palace in October. This obsession seemed to be exceptional for that year for although other artists, subsequently famed or otherwise, received editorial and photographic attention, none did to the same extent. What this detailed case study further demonstrates, however, was that the dance world in 1908 was a key component in the destabilisation of the activities deemed 'high' art and popular culture, despite the struggle of some artists to preserve – or reinstate – this demarcation.

These intersecting discourses of theatre dance activity are embedded in the venues which housed dance. Both the Palace and the Alhambra were music halls, typical of the kind of venues in which the early moderns appeared, for they 'permitted an independence and diversity to individual performers not available elsewhere' (Koritz 1995: 431). Thus, the burgeoning world of modern dance as art began in the venues of popular entertainment. These venues were not, however, immune to the 'art' world, as revealed by La Belle Leonora's parody of Maud Allan and other classical dancers, referred to earlier. The newspaper caption for this show, 'Nautchy Sal, the High Priestess of Pure Art mysteries' (*The Sketch*, 29 April: 67) not only gives serious Salomé the nomenclature of the girl next door, but embraces the contemporary fascination, milked by St Denis, with the nautch, a name for both an Indian dance and the professional women who danced it. This one newspaper caption encapsulates the diversity of professional women dance performers and the forms they deployed.

Because of their backward-looking stance it is tempting for historians to take a diachronic view which can result in neat categorisations of genre, of venue or of artistic status. A close examination, however, of dance activity in 1908 reveals a synchronic interconnectedness which disrupts this tidiness. The cross-employment of performers, ballet arrangers and designers also reveals the fluidity of the dance scene. Those who comprised the mass spectacle of the ballet found employment in whatever context it was offered, but even principals crossed the various forms of entertainment. For example, in *Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday* (Lyceum 1907/8) Edouard Espinosa played Man Friday and Dorothy Craske, Genée's *travestie* partner in the Empire ballets, played Crusoe. Elise Clerc, who performed at the Empire for nineteen years and was also ballet mistress at the Alhambra, choreographed the ballets and processions in *Cinderella* (Adelphi 1908) and Wilhelm, renowned designer of the Empire ballets for many years, contributed the costume designs for this production and for *Peter Pan* (Duke

of York's 1904, rev. 1908). The Alhambra ballet arranger Carlo Coppi arranged the ballets for *Babes in the Wood* (Drury Lane) and *Dick Whittington* (Drury Lane). *The Girls of Gottenberg*, a musical play, had dances arranged by Fred Farren, a popular entertainer and later ballet arranger who succeeded Katti Lanner at the Empire. Just dipping in to the employment scene in 1908 exposes the fluidity of a job market which significantly lessened as the twentieth century progressed and the worlds of 'art' and 'entertainment' became increasingly discrete.

To return to Foucault's terminology, this overview of dance events in London in 1908 has taken an archaeological perspective. That is, it has explored a layer, a strata, of dance history rather than a linear development. No attempt has been made to expand on cross influences between dancers or dance forms, except to note instances which demonstrate that, despite their different generic labels, these are not immune from cross-fertilisation, from borrowing, from parody. Some of the 'conditions of possibility' which allow this dance activity to manifest itself, and to contribute to those very conditions, have been identified. Such identification reveals how dance in all its diversity responds to and contributes to its time. If the relationship of dance to its culture has been explicit in scholarship only in the last few decades, Crawford Flitch, at the beginning of the century, was alert to the notion that

All art is of its time, the greatest as well as the least. It might be supposed that the dance has too slight a content to express to be under the obligation of borrowing anything from the ideas of the age. But it has always responded not only to the rhythm of personal emotional life, but also to the larger social rhythm of the time.

Flitch 1912: 91

Flitch's point about the 'the greatest and the least', although imbued with a value judgement which still exists today, is pertinent when taking a synchronic view of history. With such a perspective, all cultural manifestations are of equal importance, all part of the 'social rhythms' of the time. The working class dancer in pantomime and Maud Allan each, in their own way, share the stage with the suffragettes. Adeline Genée travels to the United States and St Denis travels from there in a common pattern of international exchange made possible by new media, transport and technology. When the glories of the Edwardian period began to be seen as those of surfeit and increasing fragility, Isadora Duncan and the management of the Empire Palace of Varieties look back to a more innocent, mythical golden age. The staged presentation of a battleship and St Denis' presentation of scenes from India may seem gifts of respect to another culture, but are imbued with subtexts of cultural dominance.¹⁹

Flitch (1912: 9) may well have been right in his assessment of the period when he claimed, 'it is not unlikely that when the art historian of the future comes to treat of the artistic activity of the first decade of the twentieth century, he will remark as one of its most notable accomplishments a renaissance of the art of Dance'. Unfortunately, not only have the great majority of art historians neglected dance, but even dance historians have tended to travel through the period, mainly following the journeys of the modern dance pioneers, rather than

settling within it. By examining activity across the period of one single year, a flavour can be gained of the conditions of possibility which produced a dance scene which was quite extraordinary in its diversity, its vibrancy and its popularity.

Such a model of historical research, which could also be adopted as a method in the pedagogy of dance history,²⁰ privileges the synchronic approach across time rather than the traditional diachronic view through time. It has the potential to help us fundamentally re-vision dance history. By juxtaposing 'high art' and popular culture it can prompt us to reflect on their hierarchical status which, at certain moments in history, has been slippery if not arbitrary. The job market is seen to be more flexible than that exploited by dance artists in Britain today.²¹ The concept of individual genius becomes destabilised when the work of an individual artist is placed alongside that of others working in a similar mode. Furthermore, although I have focussed here on theatre dance forms, a fascinating project would be to place social dance within the frame. Long parted (in Western culture) from their common roots, a synchronous study of theatre and social dance could reveal not only their discrete manifestations but also the interconnectedness produced by their shared cultural conditions of possibility. Such a study would indeed paint a rich picture of the dancing practice – and consciousness – of society.

NOTES

1. These and others who practised in similar modes were described as classical or 'interpretive' dancers by the press of the time. Historiography has since recast them as early modern dance pioneers and I will refer to them as such hereon.
2. The quotations are taken from the 1997 translation of Foucault's 1966 text, with Foucault's own foreword added in 1970. An 'epistemological field' pertains to a philosophical theory which attempts to characterise a knowledge domain and how it has arisen. One approach to this enquiry rests on the belief that knowledge is observable and able to be described – the 'positivity' to which Foucault refers.
3. As Munz (in Bentley 1997, ch. 34) argues, however, it is disingenuous to eliminate 'cause' in historiography as all narratives, including the writing of history, are constructed by a series of causal relationships. For other views which specifically contest the significance of Foucault's work, see Burke (1992).
4. I am referring specifically here to the historiography of Western theatre dance. The relationship of dance to culture has long been a self evident and accepted critical position in other disciplinary fields such as anthropology and ethnology. A more detailed account which exposes the 'causal' versus the 'conditions of possibility' debate can be found in Linda Tomko's investigation of the women socialites who patronised the early modern dancers in America (Tomko in Carter 2004).
5. There are texts, of course, which look across dance genres from a particular perspective; for example, Banes (1998), Burt (1998) and Desmond (2001). This article differs from these and others not only in its specific focus on a particular year, but in not having a specific 'theme' as a unifying factor.
6. I was particularly interested in how dance was received by and represented in the press of the period, for it is in such sources that the diversity of activity is revealed. *The Sketch* may seem to be over represented here, but it was a particularly prolific source as it addressed a broad spectrum of the arts and entertainment scene as well as news.
7. The question of the relationship between theatre dance and social dance at a particular

- moment in time is equally fascinating, but it is beyond my current remit.
8. London was not the only city to house such a vibrant diversity of forms and practitioners. St Denis (1939) notes that in 1909 in New York, Duncan, Adeline Genée, Pavlova and Maud Allan, plus a popular vaudeville artist Mlle. Dazie, all appeared within the space of a few weeks.
 9. *The Sketch* also notes that Kyasht had been promoted from a 'turn' in the bill to *première danseuse* in the ballet, taking the place of Genée who was leaving to perform in the United States.
 10. Although I call this an 'artistic demotion' and in the perception of many it was, it is important to recognise the fluidity of the entertainment scene. Yvette Guilbert, the respected French artiste, also appeared on the same bill as Allan, as did the famous *travesti* performer, Vesta Tilley.
 11. Despite the centrality of ballet to pantomime, it has 'dropped through the middle' of historical discourse. Pantomime/theatre historians ignore it in their texts despite glaring pictorial evidence to the contrary, and it appears to be largely absent from dance historiography.
 12. Drury Lane presented *Babes in the Wood* from January to March, and *Dick Whittington* in December, both with ballets by Carlo Coppi, the famed Alhambra choreographer.
 13. Despite this mythological source, the reviewer of Duncan's *Iphigénie* was not at all clear of the story, or what some of the dances 'meant' (*The Era*, 11 July: 15).
 14. Although he is addressing a slightly earlier period, Bram Dijkstra (1986) offers a fascinating account of the relationship between images of women and nature at the end of the nineteenth century. *The Sketch* in 1908 reveals that these composite images are still dominant but because of the popular appeal of a weekly newspaper, they do not have the malign manifestations discussed by Dijkstra but are far 'prettier'.
 15. The Apache dance was a duet shown originally at the Moulin Rouge in 1908, after which it became the rage of Paris. In London, it was presented by Mlle. Sylvie and M. Volbert at the London Coliseum (later at the Alhambra), and incorporated in to *A Day in Paris* wherein it was performed by Fred Farren and Beatrice Collier at the Empire. The term 'apache' was the equivalent of 'hooligan' and the dance depicted a passionately rendered modern day relationship of love and jealousy.
 16. Between 1876–1915 approximately one quarter of the world's land was colonised by six nations (Hobsbawm 1987).
 17. Scott would have been able to observe closely Allan's dance as he shared the bill with her at the Palace in April 1908.
 18. This was not the only demonstration of this newspaper's concern with authenticity. In a note captioned 'A Remarkable Anachronism', the writer ponders the fact that in the Moscow production of *The Pharaoh's Daughter* (assumedly Petipa's work of 1862), all the characters wore period clothes except for the *première danseuse* (Pavlova) who danced in a conventional tutu and 'in this garb she danced before Pharaoh' (*The Sketch*, 1 April: 369). The writer is showing off a little here for this tradition had long been seen on the stages of the Alhambra and Empire but it does reveal not only a modern day consciousness but also an awareness, within a popular newspaper, of the international dance scene.
 19. St Denis acknowledged that in her programme for the Scala, her 'aim is to present a vivid picture of India'. Supported by a company of Indian performers, she presented scenes such as 'The Street', 'The Palace' and 'The Temple' (*The Sketch*, 7 Oct. 1908: xii).
 20. See Carter (2005b) for an explication of how this model can be used in the teaching and learning of dance history at undergraduate level.
 21. See, for example. 'Choreography as work' (2001), London: Dance UK.

APPENDIX: WORKS CITED IN ARTICLE, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

The Belle of the Ball (Farren, Adeline Genée 1907)

A topical ballet set in Covent Garden market after a fancy dress ball at the Opera House. It incorporated a motor car on stage and an entry by Adeline Genée on a real donkey.

Les Cloches de Corneville (Curti 1907)

Adapted from Planquette's *opéra comique* about a miser and his hoard of gold, the scenes included a dance of apple gatherers and a notable vision of the tallest of the *corps de ballet* dressed as shining knights in armour.

Coppélia (Alexander Genée 1906, rev. 1908)

To Delibes music arranged by C. J. M. Glaser, this production arose from Adeline Genée's insistence that the Empire stage a classical ballet for her. Based on E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale of *The Sandman*, it tells of the dancing doll created by Dr Coppélius who seemingly comes to life, attracting young Franz and disrupting his romance with village girl Swanilda.

Cupid Wins (Curti 1908)

Not unduly noted by critics, this appears to have been an unassuming piece which drew on characters from the *Commedia dell'arte*.

A Day in Paris (Farren, Alexander Genée 1908)

A tourist frolic which included not only the famous Apache Dance (see note 15) but also a demonstration of 'toe dancing' with a skipping rope, a Danse Russe for Kyasht and a military spectacle of the Zouaves.

The Dryad (Alexander Genée 1908)

This work, a pastoral fantasy, was created in 1907 and presented at the Empire in 1908. It comprised only three performers: Adeline Genée, Connie Walker (a dancer from the *corps*) and the singer Gordon Cleaver. It depicted the legend of the dryad who, neglected by her lover, is entrapped within and almost becomes personified as a tree.

Iphigénie en Aulide (Duncan 1905)

Daly (1995:146) claims that in the Gluck operas used by Duncan as accompaniment, of which this was one, she did not portray the main character(s) *per se*. In this work, from a description given by Irma Duncan (in Daly pp. 147–8), she seems to have attempted to capture the spirit of classicism as well as hints of the story. For example, the dance included the offering of a gift to Aphrodite and a gestured acknowledgment of the approach of the Greek fleet. The lack of an obvious narrative might have been the reason for the critic's puzzlement over the work's 'meaning' (see note 13). The piece was reworked between 1905–1915.

Paquita (Curti 1908)

This romantic ballet provided a vehicle for the young Danish dancer Britta Petersen (known as Britta). The work, about a gypsy girl and a Spanish nobleman, provided the excuse for, among other set pieces, a Mazurka, a Farandole and a Bacchanalia Dance.

Sal! Oh! My! (no chor. cited, 1908)

This performance which starred La Belle Leonora, to music by the Alhambra's resident composer George Byng, parodied the new 'classical' dances, including not only Allan's *Salomé* but also her *Spring Song* (see below) which was interspersed with the 'Tara-ra-boom-de-ay' chorus from Lottie Collin's fashionable song.

Spring Song (Allan 1903)

To music of the same name by Mendelssohn, this was one of a series of classical dances presented by Allan at The Palace during her long London season. Described as 'an *allegretto*

grazioso chase of butterflies and plucking of wild flowers. With rapid sallies hither and thither, now a-tiptoe, now on bended knee, she danced the joy of all living things in the spring' (Crawford Flitch 1912: 112–13).

The Two Flags (Curti 1908)

This work was a celebration of the *Entente Cordiale*. It coincided with an Anglo-French exhibition and the state visit of the French President Fallière. The scenes comprised Ancient Britain, The Mistress of the Sea, Hands Across the Sea, Presentation of a Dreadnought, Defence of the Flag and the Finale, which included a Dance of Britannia.

The Vision of Salomé (Allan 1907)

This was a version of the legend of Salomé to music by Marcel Rémy. Its critical reception highlighted the ambiguity of the work, for Allan's Salomé was perceived as both an image of refined, idealised womanhood and, at the same time, one who possessed overt sexuality and even sadism. (See Allan 1908 for her own account of the narrative and Koritz 1995 for a detailed discussion of its artistic and cultural resonances.)

Pantomimes

Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday; Cinderella; Babes in the Wood; Dick Whittington.

These pantomimes are some of many which populated the theatres' Christmas (and sometimes other) seasons. Their titles are indicative of their subject matter. Pantomime had come a long way from John Weaver's early eighteenth century pantomime ballets. Characteristics of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century productions were the increased use of spoken dialogue and song, imported by the music hall artists who brought their acts or stage personas with them. Significantly for dance history, many of these pantomimes also presented spectacular ballets and choreographed processions, the remains of a tradition which catered for the Victorian love of theatrical spectacle.

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